

RESPONSE TO MESSAGES THAT ANGER:
THE EFFECTS OF GENDER AND
RELATIONSHIP TYPE

By

JENNIFER E. WIRTH

Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma State University

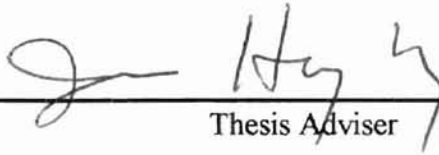
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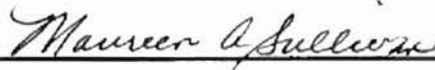
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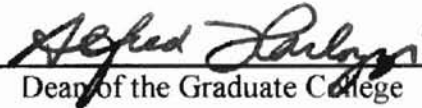
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Dean of the Graduate College

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Chapter I

Intoduction

Background.

Since it is virtually impossible to go through a single day without experiencing the effects of emotion, it is essential for scholars to know the importance that emotions have on our communication patterns. Communication encounters at the interpersonal level are affected by emotions. However, researchers neglect to look at the effects of emotions on message production, specifically in regards to anger.

A state of anger can cause a communication encounter to be ultimately destroyed. The experience of an emotion during a communication encounter can interrupt otherwise thought-out messages, which then cause the process of message production to go awry. Angry interactions may hinder some relationships and have little affect on others. Research demonstrates that people can experience a great deal of anger based on what others say or do to them, but it is how people respond when they are angry that has evoked little research.

Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) suggest that relationships serve as backdrops for how individuals react to communication encounters. Therefore, different reactions will be expressed for the same type of communication encounter based on the relationship between the communicators. Duck and Pond (1989) indicate that the quality of interpersonal relationships, such as closeness, satisfaction, and history, affects the way

messages are produced during an encounter. The types of messages that are produced are tied to the type of relationship in which people are involved. Scholars have suggested that there are associations between family members, acquaintances, and romantic partners, that provide for the difference in communication.

When dealing with relationships, it is important also to look at the gender of the communicator because research has demonstrated that women and men report feeling and expressing emotions differently, and they are judged by others as being different emotionally (Anderson & Leaper, 1998).

Since anger is an emotion that causes messages to be destroyed, this research will explore the different types of angry messages that are produced because of the relationship type and gender. The study of message production, emotion, and relationship and gender communication patterns, has received much attention in research, but lacks the connection between the variables. The research question that guided the study was:

RQ1: What are the effects of gender and relationship type on the communicative reactions people have to messages that anger?

Based on this question, the following hypothesis were developed:

H₁ : Relationship type will influence messages produced as a result of anger.

H₂ : Gender will influence messages produced as a result of anger.

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of messages produced by college students in a state of anger. In addition the study identified the types of messages as they related to the type of relationship and gender of the communicator. This adds to the current research because no other study has looked at anger as a response to messages

and the effects of gender and relationship type. The overall significance of the research is to present a better understanding of the effects of anger on communication.

Chapter II contains detailed information about emotion, anger, and message production. The chapter also contains information about relationship type and gender in relation to the way that people communicate.

Chapter III contains detailed information about the methodology of the research. The chapter includes demographics about the subjects. In addition, the chapter also includes information about the procedure and an analysis of the data. This information is then analyzed and discussed in later chapters.

Chapter IV provides the results of the research. Chapter V discusses the finding in detail and determines whether the research hypothesis will be accepted. Chapter VI contains a discussion of the limitations of the research as well as ideas for future research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Emotion and anger.

The powerful role played by emotions, in day-to-day interaction, is widely disputed by scholars. However, it is not debated, that it is virtually impossible to encounter a day that is free of emotions and emotional reactions. Studies of emotion in interpersonal communication have produced many theories that have influenced a significant body of research and literature. The review of literature will examine emotion, anger, and how messages are produced. Furthermore, the literature will provide a rationale for relationship type communication interactions and gender communication.

Davits (1964) constructed a multidimensional model of the language of emotions, which identified fifty emotions. Davits provided an initial model, which prompted further research to be constructed. Extensive research has since placed these emotions in prototypes that organize the knowledge of emotions in hierarchical levels with the basic six emotions at the top of the hierarchy, and mixed versions, or blends, of those emotions filter down into the lower levels. The six basic emotions were identified as love, joy, anger, sadness, fear, and surprise (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Conner, 1987; Shaver et al, 1987). Another prototype revealed eight primary emotions that were functions of polar opposites and based on the belief that emotions are appropriate to assure survival of

the organism (Plutchik, 1984). The identification of basic emotions has been the basis for research since the first prototype was constructed.

In order to look at the effects of emotion on communication, a basic understanding of emotion must be established. The display of emotions is sustained through generations by the socialization and the communication of emotions.

To grasp how communication during an emotional encounter takes place, scholars must first understand how emotions affect the body. Electrophysical changes occur in the muscles of the face during heightened emotions (Ruslova, Izard & Simonov, 1975; Schwartz, Fair, Greenburg, Freedman, & Klerman, 1974). The brain experiences electrical activity, and the circulatory and respiratory systems have abrupt changes during the emotion (Simonov, 1975). During a strong anger encounter, heart rate may increase as much as 40 to 60 beats per minute (Ruslova et al., 1975). Recollection of an anger episode probably stands out in the minds of many as we remember our hand grip tightening, the heart pounding, rapid breathing in and out while gasping for air, hands shaking out of control, and legs becoming wobbly. Dramatic changes in the bodily functions during a strong anger episode suggest that the neurophysiological systems of the body can be extensively involved during emotion.

Emotions can function as a state or a trait with genetic and environmental determinants. Emotional state and traits are separated by the duration of the experience, not the differences in the quality of the experience (Cattell & Scheier, 1961; Spielberger, 1966). The experience of any emotion can last for a few seconds or a few hours which would, in turn, classify the emotion as trait or state. However, the experience of the emotion is generally the same. Emotions can have genetic and environmental

determinants. Scholars agree that certain emotions are genetic in that they are expressed in the same general manner throughout all cultures from virtually every continent, including those isolated cultures that have no contact with western civilization (Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth, 1975; Izard, 1971). However, the manner in which people express these emotions is quite idiosyncratic.

Emotions are communicated through a variety of channels. For instance, many studies examine facial and vocal behavior. Overwhelmingly, these studies have revealed that emotional meaning is more accurately conveyed through vocal expression (Davitz & Davitz, 1959; Dusenberry & Knower, 1939; Knower, 1941/1945; Pfaff, 1953; Thompson & Bradway, 1950; Fairbanks & Pronevost, 1939). However, angry expressions are frequently enhanced through symptoms such as reddening of the face and perspiration because of the automatic and uncontrollable bodily functions. Other studies have looked at the way emotions can be interpreted by the expression displayed on the face (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond).

The development of anger and hostile interactions in communication have been seen as a primary human emotion that has evolved to enhance the survival of the species (Izard, 1977). Anger serves to regulate internal physiological, psychological, and self-defense mechanisms in order to regulate social and interpersonal communication (Averill, 1982; Izard & Kobak, 1991; Klinnert, Campos, Sorce, Emde, & Svejda, 1983; Lewis, Sullivan, Rasmay, & Alessandri, 1992; Sroufe, Schork, Motti, Lawroski, & Fremoere, 1984; Stemberg & Campos, 1990). Therefore, anger is an organizer of behavior and social signals that regulate interpersonal behavior and communication from

early on in life. Boulton (1979) found that when one is emotionally charged physical changes occur; he states:

adrenaline flows faster and our strength increases by about twenty percent. The liver, pumping sugar into the bloodstream, demands more oxygen from the heart and lungs. The veins become enlarged and the cortical centers where thinking takes place do not perform nearly as well... the blood supply to the problem-solving part of the brain is severely decreased because, under stress, a greater portion of blood is diverted to the body's extremities (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, pg. 315).

The effects of emotions are physical reactions. Some reactions can be controlled and others can not. The reactions that are controlled are done so by the socialization of norms in our environment and society.

The socialization of anger and communication "display rules" can be observed as early as the first year of life (Malatest & Haviland, 1982). During infancy, anger expressions have been observed in response to physical restraint, such as removing a teething biscuit or physical interference of an infant's activities (Stenberg, 1987). After the first year, and before school age, there is little data about the expression of anger except the "terrible twos." However, most of the research on anger comes from studies that only look at the development and at the socialization of anger in young children. Parents act as major socializers of anger. Infants look to their parents to determine when it is acceptable and appropriate to express anger. Parents, in turn, teach children the appropriate way to communicate and to express anger. Peers also socialize anger

expression and communication through teasing and exclusion of children that are inappropriate (Lewis & Haviland, 1993).

While socialization of displaying all emotions begins when children are very young, as they grow older they have been socialized to suppress emotions. Inhibiting the expression of emotional behavior is referred to as emotion suppression (Gross & Levenson, 1993). People attempt to influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions (Gross, Feldman, Barrett, & Richards, 1999; Morris & Reilly, 1987; Thayer, Newman, & McCain, 1994). Adults are successful at inhibiting signs of emotional behavior even when they feel high levels of emotion (Gross, 1998). Richards and James (1999) found that suppression of negative emotions impairs our memory. Furthermore, emotion suppression impaired the memory for information encountered while individuals inhibited the behavior (Richards & James, 1999).

Communication of emotions is linked to our overall health. Dunbar (1947) found that emotions could have an effect on the health of cardiovascular patients. Those people that experience cardiovascular problems are more likely to have communication patterns that are hidden. For example, they have trouble expressing their feelings, keeping people at a distance, and/or they are argumentative. Seyle (1956) found that people subjected to stress have an increased chance of contracting infectious disease. Studies have shown that the effects of emotions on our bodies can have a detrimental effect to our overall health.

The lack of explicit data surrounding anger is limited to the assertions one can generalize around the study of emotion. Several models of affect and cognition predict

that negative affective states lead to a narrowed focus of attention (Bruner, Matter, & Papenek, 1955; Easterbrook, 1959), whereas positive affective states lead to more flexible categorizations (Murray, Sujan, Hirt, & Sujan, 1990; Sinclair & Mark, 1992). Therefore, one can assert that as anger mounts, the effects of communication can lead to a narrowed focus of attention (Bohner & Schwarz, 1993). A negative affect is experienced when the situation is defined by a lack of a positive mood or a threat of negative outcomes (Frijda, 1988; Higgins, 1987). Negative effects are assumed to inform the person of undesirable outcomes and, in order to change the situations, the information is communicated conservatively (Bohner & Schwarz, 1993).

Nonetheless, the primary cognitive processes, related to effects, differ when a person's task is to produce a message. Persons in a positive mood are more original and creative. Since anger reflects a negative mood, an assumption can be made that message production will be relatively uncreative and unoriginal during a state of anger (Bohner & Schwarz, 1993).

Dillard and Harkness (1992) explored the affective impact of interpersonal influence messages and dominance. They looked at the implicit and explicit directness of the intent and influence attempts. Explicit directives make the source's intent clear to the target. In addition, dominant messages will convey the source's intent to act on his/her own behalf rather than accommodate the target's concerns. They found that dominance produced anger.

Message production.

The research surrounding the socialization, effects, and communication of emotions, as it relates to the study of anger, has been identified. Let us examine how this anger relates to message production during the anger episode.

In recent years, message production has become a widely recognized and studied area. O'Keefe and Delia (1982) were the first communication scholars to use the term. Message production scholars are interested in understanding why people say the things they do. Many attempts have been made at creating schemes for analyzing message production, such as directness (e.g., Dillard, Sergrin, & Segrin, 1989), listener adaptedness (e.g., Clark & Delia, 1977), and types of message strategies (e.g., Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). Over the last decade, scholars have looked extensively at interpersonal message strategies, such as inducing compliance, resisting persuasion, providing comfort, seeking affinity, and maintaining relationships (Sawyer & King, 1998).

Message production has an expected link to the cognitive processes of the producer. The producer of the message thinks out, and mindfully attends to, the construction of every communicative message. It is often assumed that there is a selection of verbal messages that accompanies each behavior, which is based on cognitive intentional processes of the transceiver (Seibold, Cantrill, & Meyers, 1985). However, Langer (1985) provides evidence that messages can be mindless or without conscious control or intention. Therefore, research has not indicated whether or not messages that are constructed as a result of anger are mindless or if they are intentional, deliberate, and conscious.

Relationship type.

The types of messages that are produced are tied to the type of relationship in which people are involved. Relationships can vary from platonic to dating to marital and even family. Scholars have suggested that there are associations between family members, acquaintances, and romantic partners, which provide for the difference in communication. De Rivera and Grinkis (1986) found that emotions affect and are affected by human relationships; people's reaction to emotion carry with them information about the relationships in which they occur.

Booth (1991) thinks that family relationships represent distinct contexts for interaction that include involuntary selection of communicating patterns and the history of many interactions. For instance, if we are angry with a family member we might say words similar to the words used during a previous communication encounter with that family member without thinking about it. The characteristic of family relationships that make them unique is the history the members bring to each communication interaction. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) found that any given communication behavior is a reaction within a system. Understanding one person or communication act is possible only by understanding the pattern in which the act takes place. Furthermore, the communication behaviors of an individual are the result of the system or communication patterns between the communicators rather than the people (Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967).

Research on the patterns of interaction between parents and children shows communication behavior differences. Bellinger and Gleason (1982) found that fathers and mothers speak differently to each of their children. Buerkel-Rothfuss, Covert, Keith, and Nelson (1986) found that parents do not speak the same to sons and daughters. Sons are spoken to in a more active manner and daughters are spoken to in softer tones, with more emphasis on thoughts and feelings. When dealing with anger these types of patterns should develop as well.

Galvin and Cooper (1990) found that communication between close friends would be voluntary and those communicating have a choice in the matter. Close relationships are defined by both the presence of interconnected activity over time and the experience of diverse activities and communication interactions (Kelley, H.H., Berscheid, E., Christensen, A., Huston, T.L., Levinger, G., McClintock, E. Peplau, L.A., & Peterson, D.R., 1983). Mets and Bowers (1994) found that individual association with one another provide a context for interpreting emotions. People in close, satisfying relationships who are hurt by their friend will respond to their feelings in a different way than those in relationships not characterized as close (Mets & Bowers, 1994).

A number of studies have distinguished the difference of passion between romantic involvement and friendship (e.g., Davis & Todd, 1982; Rubin, 1973; Sternberg, 1986). The emotional and physical arousal, which is characterized as passion, affects the way people respond to remarks (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). The emotional and physical arousal that characterizes passion may affect the way people respond to communication interactions because the arousal generates reactions that are relatively intense (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). However, Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) found that those who are

passionately involved in their relationships may be so shocked by their hurt feelings that they are unable to respond in very active ways and in turn might just walk away.

Gender.

Gender and communication has become a highly evaluated topic in the last twenty years. Research indicates that men and women differ in their emotional display rules. However, although little research shows the difference in reactions to emotion and more specifically anger, research does indicate the generalities and assumptions based on gender. Bate and Bowker (1997) have identified biological, cultural, rhetorical and power as four perspectives about gender and communication. The biological perspective suggests that communication with regard to gender is predetermined biology. The genetic system, hormonal system, and functions of the brain differ between the genders (Tingley, 1994). Most importantly, Bate and Bowker (1997) found that a cell cluster in the nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus in the brain may be responsible for regulating male-typical behavior. The research also showed that the parts of the brain involved in action-oriented responses were more active in males. The cultural perspective on gender and communication develops the idea that repeated communications patterns acceptable to the culture are responsible for the difference in communication between genders. (Bate & Bowker, 1997). A rhetorical perspective on the difference in gender communication analyzes the process of symbolism and responsibilities of each gender in a communication encounter. Rhetoric is a means by which men and women can individually create and modify gender. Finally, Bate and Bowker (1997) discussed power

perspective in regards to the difference in gender communication. Power is the outcome of hierarchically ranking system on gender differences within cultures. Power is an approach to communication that indicates the amount of influence or power the individual has in relation to the other communicator.

The types of messages that are produced are affected by the type of relationship, and also by the gender of the person making the message. Dindia and Allen, (1992) found that women disclose their feeling to a greater extent. When asked about the most emotional person they know, college students describe a female much more often than a male (Shields, 1987). Grossman and Wood (1993) found that college students generally viewed women as experiencing and expressing emotions more often, and more intensely, than the men. Compared to men, women often report feeling and expressing the following emotions: more fear (Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Blier & Blier-Wilson, 1989; Brody, 1985; Brody, Hay & Vanderwater, 1990; Croake, Myers, & Singh, 1987; Highlen & Gilles, 1978; Highlen & Johnston, 1979; Kirkpatrick, 1984), more sadness (Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Grossman & Wood, 1993), more shame and guilt (Tagney, 1990), less pride (Tagney, 1990), and more intense positive and negative feelings in general (Brody, 1993; Diener, Sandvik, & Larsen, 1985). Anger was the only emotion viewed as more typical of men (Grossman & Wood, 1993).

Women and men report feeling and expressing emotions differently, and are judged by others as being different emotionally (Anderson & Leaper, 1998). Documented gender differences in facial expression and in other nonverbal behavior (e.g., LaFrance & Banaji, 1992) suggest that some of the judgements about women's and men's emotionality may be based on their nonverbal behaviors.

Research has examined gender differences in perceptions of some messages. Metts, Cupach, and Imahori (1992) investigated interpretations of rejection strategies and females viewed rejections more negatively than males. Tannen (1990) claims that men and women interpret messages differently. Edwards (1998) found that the common gender role was a more salient predictor of interpretation of a message than biological sex. Stamp, Vangelisti, and Daly (1992) found females reported greater levels of defensiveness and greater sensitivity to the situation than males.

Critique of current literature.

The current research has identified the effects of emotions on the human body and on communication in general. Research has shown a direct link between communication and relationship types and gender.

There is a notion that links emotion and message production. Many scholars have looked at the communicative reactions people tend to have to messages that hurt, messages that are joyous, and messages that are persuasive.

However, the main limitation in the research is the link between anger and message production. The studies have not looked at this link, nor have they identified the variables that contribute to message production during anger.

Gender communication is a widely researched area but it lacks research in the area of gender responses to messages that anger.

Chapter III

Methodology

Participants.

The sample consisted of 368 respondents recruited from Oklahoma State University's introduction to communication class who recalled a time that someone made them angry. Subjects were instructed to keep that time in mind during the survey. Students completed surveys concerning the messages they produced because of their anger. For this research, the independent variables were gender and relationship type. The dependent variables were the types of messages produced when angry.

The sample was reduced to 361 for the following exclusion criteria: 4 were eliminated because the results could not be coded and 3 were eliminated because they didn't complete the survey. Of the remaining group of participants, 186 individuals were male, 174 were female and one did not indicate a gender. The 361 participants indicated the relationship type. Of this group, 69 individuals indicated acquaintance as the relationship that they evaluated, 128 individuals indicated friend, 66 individuals indicated romantic partner, 64 individuals indicated family member, and 33 individuals indicated a stranger as the relationship type. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 52 years and the median age was 20. The ethnic background of the participants showed that 312 (86.4%) were from white/non-hispanic background, 18 were black/African American, 15 were Native American, 11 were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5 were from the

Hispanic/Latino background. Of the demographic group, 9 more cases were deleted in the final calculation due to incomplete message reaction data, leaving a final sample size of 352.

Procedures.

A nonprobability sampling method was employed through a convenience sampling technique. The survey and research procedures of the study met the requirements and were approved by the Institutional Review Board. All participants were volunteers solicited from Speech Communication classes at Oklahoma State University. The surveys were administered in various classrooms on the Oklahoma State University campus. The researcher gave instructions for the students not to write any specific information about themselves (name, class, etc.) on the survey. They were asked to fill out a questionnaire that included demographics that were relative to this study such as gender, age, and the type of relationship they had with the person that angered them. Participants read the specific instructions and completed the survey at their own desk. The time estimated for survey completion was 20 minutes. All participants received the same survey.

Initially, to explain the reactions people have to messages that make them angry, participants recalled a conversation, or a single communication encounter, in which someone said something or did something that made them angry. Next, they were asked to write a brief script or description of the interaction that they recalled when someone said or did something that made them angry. Finally, they were asked to write as closely as possible what they said in response to the situation they described. Specifically, they

were asked to indicate how they handled the anger and what types of messages were produced as a result of the anger.

To seek the range of reactions people have to angry messages, the open-ended data generated in the questionnaire was examined. The participants' description of their reactions to angry messages was coded in a series of steps. The entire sample of responses was examined, and initial categories identified the types of messages produced. To check the reliability of this coding procedure, a second and third coder coded the data as well.

Analysis.

The data for this study were analyzed in two phases. First, to permit exploration of the reactions people have to messages that anger them, participants recounted conversation in which someone said something that made them angry. To explore the range of reactions people have to messages that anger, the open-ended data generated in the study were examined. The entire sample of responses was examined, and initial categories were devised using analytic induction. Only the first or initial message reaction was coded. Preliminary category definitions were written and the responses were re-read. The categories were then refined; some were collapsed, some were added, and others were deleted. Finally, the data were coded. With the exception of 9 reactions (2%), all fit within one of the categories. To check the reliability of this coding procedure, a second and third coder categorized all the data. To further check reliability, approximately 25% of the responses were also checked by the opposite coders. The

analysis of the data by the coders resulted in 95.6% agreement. Of the disagreement on the responses and their placement in a category, a random adoption of coder's assessment was put in place to indicate the decision. A list of the reaction categories in the final coding and examples of each appear in Table 1.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine whether or not two variables were independent of each other and statistically significant. The chi-square analysis examined gender and each of the reactions to determine whether the type of reaction that would result was dependent on gender. A chi-square analysis examined the relationship type and each of the reactions to determine if certain reactions were dependent on the type of relationship.

Chapter IV

Results

Descriptive statistics calculated for each of the demographic questions to indicate the mean age, percent of males and females, race, and gender. The initial categories were refined: some were collapsed, some were added, and others were deleted. Verbal Attack was expanded to include profanity and yelling. Sarcasm was moved into the confront category and venting was deleted. Definitions of the categories can be found in Table 1. Frequency counts of the reaction categories are illustrated in Table 2. As evidenced in Table 2, the frequency counts indicate that ignore and confront were the most common responses to messages that anger, whereas crying were the least common.

Two hypotheses were posed for the basis of this study. First it was hypothesized that the relationship type will influence messages produced as a result of anger. Table 3 displays the frequency counts of message reactions across the relationship types. A chi-square analysis was calculated to examine the relationship between relationship type and message reactions. A statistically significant effect was found for the difference in message reactions and relationship type ($\chi^2 = 47.750$ (df=15), $p < .001$). Separate chi-square analyses were done for each of the reaction type to examine where independent significance could be found across the reaction types. There was a significant reaction for four of the reactions, ignore ($\chi^2 = 14.971$ (df = 3), $p < .05$), confront ($\chi^2 = 34.111$ (df = 3), $p < .001$), and hit ($\chi^2 = 16.250$ (df = 3), $p < .001$). All of the other reactions were not significant ($p > .05$).

The second hypothesis stated that gender would influence the messages produced as a result of anger. Table 4 displays the frequency counts of message reactions across

gender. A chi-square test of independence was calculated to compare the association between gender and message reactions. A statistically significant effect was found for the difference in message reactions and gender ($\chi^2 = 19.463$ (df=5), $p < .002$). Separate chi-squared analyses were calculated for each of the reaction types to determine whether there was independent significance. There was a significant association with gender for two of the reaction types, hit ($\chi^2 = 11.645$ (df = 1), $p < .001$) and cry ($\chi^2 = 4.571$ (df = 1), $p < .05$). None of the other reactions differed by gender ($p > .05$).

Chapter V

Discussion of Findings

This study focused on people's reactions to messages that angered them. The results of this study offer some initial glimpses of the conceptual connections between gender and relationship type to reactions that anger them. Individuals' self reported responses to anger were explored and the associations between these reactions and the type of relationship. The study resulted in the identification of types of message responses. An inductive analysis of open-ended data initially identified ten different message reaction responses. The ten message reactions were reduced to six (see Table 1). As evidenced in Table 2, the most common responses were ignore and confront. The least common were defend and cry.

The first research question concerned the type of relationship and the reaction to angry messages. The analysis of findings revealed that ignore and confront were more likely to happen when the relationship type was a friend. Communicators that are other and friend would hit often. If a family member anger you, you were more likely to verbally attack or just ignore the person. The first hypothesis was supported because the relationship type did indicate the difference in message reactions.

Looking at tendencies to move toward or away from a stimulus event can provide information about how emotion is felt by the communicator. Capella & Greene (1982) argue that the approach-avoidance classification is too broad to capture accurately the way most emotions are understood. Ignoring could be classified as walking away or

avoidance. Table 3 demonstrates the high frequency of ignoring across the relationships types. All the relationships, except family, found ignoring to be the highest frequency in the interaction. Lazarus (1991) found that anger reflects tendencies to approach. However, these finding found that anger did just the opposite by ignoring. Therefore, the findings of the current study were not consistent with this view. A possible explanation for the difference might be that there was not previous interaction patterns for anger among these relationships so the communicator voluntarily thought about their reactions before doing anything and then just chose to walk away.

Boothe (1991) thinks that family relationships represent contexts that contain previous history or involuntary acts based on previous interactions. That would explain why when a family member angers someone, the message reactions is most likely to be verbal attack probably because they have done that in past interactions and did not voluntarily think about what they were saying. Verbal attack is the pattern through which most interactions have taken place in the past. Which would also explain why family members were the only relationship that was consistent with the research that found anger would make people approach versus avoid the person that angered them. While, it is important to then look at why family members are less likely to defend, confront, hit, and cry. The same would hold true for these categories. These message reactions did not occur because past interactions had excluded them, therefore they were involuntarily left out as a reaction that needed to be addressed. This explanation of the results would find the study was consistent with the research that indicated family members responded to anger based on past experiences.

To address the second research hypothesis, chi square analysis was computed to reveal the significance of gender and communicative reactions. Men were more likely to hit and confront than women. While, women were more likely to cry than men. The message reaction categories that were derived from the open-ended data yielded two overall categories that could explain the difference in gender reaction to messages that anger. Ignore, hit, and cry could be lumped together to represent a nonverbal reaction to anger. The remaining three categories could be lumped into a verbal message reaction category. Men were more likely to use a verbal message reaction. Earlier research has indicated that males communicate with more action-oriented situations than women. An action-oriented reaction would consist of doing or saying something versus walking away. This is a possible explanation for why men hit and confront the person that angered them and women cry. Hitting and confronting a person is action-oriented while crying is much more passive. Therefore this study was consistent with the research that indicated men were more action-oriented in their message reactions.

The research indicated that women were viewed as more emotional than men. Dindia and Allen (1992) found that women disclose their feeling to a greater extent. Stamp Vangelisti, and Daly (1992) found females reported greater levels of sensitivity to situations than males. That would explain why women were more likely to cry than men. Crying indicates a feeling and is typically considered a more sensitive reaction to a situation.. This research was consistent with the finding that women disclose their feelings and display sensitivity to a situation more than men. However, Grossman and Wood, (1993) found that anger was the only emotion viewed as more typical of men. This study found that hitting and confronting were more frequent among men than

women. Hitting and confronting display anger which would explain why men were more likely to hit and confront than women.

Chapter VI

Limitations and Future Research

This study found consistent findings with other research. However, the consistency might be because the sample was similar to past research with all the subjects being college students. The study was limited by demographics because the majority of the respondents were Caucasian and the median age was 20. The sample size was a limitation because it did not manipulate the type of relationship. Therefore, some categories had considerably lower frequency counts and there was not an even distribution of the sample across the relationship types. Because the respondents came from a college sample, they were most likely to talk about relationships that they were currently exploring such as friendship and romantic partner versus the ones they were familiar with such as family. Respondents were asked to describe a time they were angered and not given a time frame or asked to reveal the time frame on the survey. This limited the research because respondents might have relied on an extended memory therefore forgetting the precise way they responded.

The results obtained in this study indicate connections and consistent findings with past research. However, it is possible that certain types of reaction are a result of the passion they feel towards the person that angered them. Passion is another way of indicating the level or importance of the relationship. It is possible that the level of passion generates reactions that are relatively intense. Individuals who are passionate about each other may have passionate responses to being angered. It is also possible, though, that passion leads to curtailed responses. Those who are passionately involved in

the relationship may be so shocked by their angry feelings that they are unable to respond in normal ways. This study did not look at the degree of anger felt or the passion between the individuals communicating. These two factors would have to be investigated in future research to indicate whether degree of passion and degree of anger is responsible for the difference in message reactions.

The open-ended data revealed categories. These categories would be helpful in future research by testing the frequency in which communicators reacted with these particular message reaction categories.

Because both theoretical and empirical work suggests that the contexts created by different relationships shape and reflect the ways individuals react to messages that anger, a second study should be conducted. The association between relational quality and people's responses to anger, as well as the potential effect of particular types of relationships on those responses. In addition, an effort should be made to replicate the finding in order to link individuals' reactions to angry messages and the perceived impact of those messages on the relationship.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY

SECTION A. Sponsor Information

This questionnaire was developed by a graduate student in the Speech Communication Department. The purpose of this project is to gather information regarding communication in relationships. The results will be used for a research project. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

RQ1: What are the effects of gender and type of relationship on reactions to messages that anger?

SECTION B. Please Provide the following demographic information by circling or filling in the correct information.

Sex:	Female	Age:	_____	Race/Ethnicity:	White/Caucasian
	Male				Black/African American
					Hispanic/Latino
					Asian/Pacific Islander
					Native American

Your Father's level of education and occupation _____
Some high school
High School graduate
Some college
College graduate
Post-graduate work

Your Mother's level of education and occupation _____
Some high school
High School graduate
Some college
College graduate
Post-graduate work

SECTION C. Research Information

Please recall and describe a time when someone said or did something to make you angry. Please be as detailed as possible about what was said or done by that person.

How would you characterize your relationship with the person? Circle one.

Acquaintance Friend Romantic partner Sibling Parent Stranger

Next, please indicate as closely as possible what you said in response to the above situation (ie. hit someone or something, scream at them, be silent or ignore them, etc.)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

APPENDIX B

TABLE

TABLE 1
Message Reaction Categories

Ignore:	To be silent, say nothing, walk away without acknowledging the other person, to neglect the situation or person
Verbal Attack:	To make personal accusations towards the other person, name calling, to threaten the other person, to assault with words, to yell, to use profanity
Defend:	To explain their side or fault, to move blame to someone else, validating their point of view or argument
Confront:	To face the challenge, to ask them to stop, to acknowledge consequences, a lie, or misunderstanding, to use sarcasm
Hit:	To place force on an object or person
Cry	To visibly express sadness through tears

TABLE 2
EXAMPLES AND FREQUENCIES TO RESPONSES THAT ANGER

REACTION	EXAMPLE	FREQUENCY
Ignore	"I didn't speak"	138
Verbal Attack	"You are so stupid!"	66
Defend	"It's not my fault!"	25
Confront	"Face the consequences"	81
Hit	"I hit him"	31
Cry	"I was bawling"	14

N = 352

TABLE 3**Message Reaction Frequencies Across Relationship Type**

	Ignore	Verbal Attack	Defend	Confront	Hit	Cry
Friend	51	17	6	39	12	3
Romantic Partner	26	11	7	15	1	5
Family	22	24	3	3	4	3
Other	38	11	9	24	15	3

N = 352

TABLE 4
Message Reaction Frequencies Across Gender

	Ignore	Verbal Attack	Defend	Confront	Hit	Cry
Male	63	30	14	47	25	3
Female	75	33	11	34	6	11

N = 352

APPENDIX C

IRB FORM

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 6/6/01

Date : Tuesday, June 06, 2000

IRB Application No: AS00129

Proposal Title: RESPONSE TO MESSAGES THAT ANGER: THE EFFECTS OF GENDER AND
RELATIONSHIP TYPE

Principal
Investigator(s) :

Jennifer Wirth
110 e. Lakeview B4
Stillwater, OK 74078

Jim Hughey
109 Morrill
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

Signature :


Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Tuesday, June 06, 2000

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Jennifer E. Wirth

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: RESPONSE TO MESSAGES THAT ANGER: THE EFFECTS OF GENDER
AND RELATIONSHIP TYPE

Major Field: Speech

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Albany, Oregon, on March 28, 1975, the daughter of
JoAnne M. Zielinski and Walter B. Wirth.

Education: Graduated from Astoria High School, Astoria, Oregon in June 1993;
received Bachelor of Science in Speech from Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma in July 1998. Completed the requirements for
the Master of Arts degree with a major in Speech at Oklahoma State
University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2000.

Experience: Raised in Astoria, Oregon; employed at MerCruiser, Stillwater,
Oklahoma, 1996-1998; employed by Oklahoma State University, Department of
Speech as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1998-2000;
Oklahoma State University, Department of Speech, 1995-2000.